
COMPOSER SPEAKS

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NATURE VERSUS CULTURE

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In the jubilee fortieth issue of the International Magazine for Music *New Sound*, the section ‘Composer/Musicologist Speaks’, which, for all of twenty years has been following the ‘spoken’ word of contemporary music creators and writers, opens another avenue without disrupting the essence of the fundamental idea. Namely, unlike the usual concept, which includes a conversation with one composer or musicologist, this time, following joint research by Blanka Bogunović, Ivana Perković and the writer of these lines, a greater number of composers were asked the same set of questions, who, independently from one another, replied to them and authorized their integral responses for this ‘celebratory’ issue of *New Sound*.

The questions, which place music and music creation in the context of two great concepts – nature and culture, derive from the most broadly understood theoretical field which has been built by the notions of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ in the course of history, and which has of late been vigorously re-actualized in the sense of reassessing the status and normativity of that binary and/or oppositional and/or dichotomous structure *nature/culture*.¹ Theoretical positions which

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¹ For more on this cf. e.g. studies by C. Lévi-Strauss (1949; 1958; 1973), J. Derrida (1978), P. Bourdieu (1979; 1992), B. Latour (1991; 2004), N. Evernden (1992), D. Haraway (1992), J. Butler (1993), W. Cronon (1996), K. Soper (1995), T. Eagleton (2000) etc.

regard the nature/culture dichotomy more like a historical construct than like the strict reflection of a division between the two spheres or states of existence as such,² dispute and refute this opposition by exploring its historical roots and foundations, while some other theses prove that, in practice, it is not possible to cast off the conceptual and discursive structures this opposition brings. However, the intersection points which are revealed between the constructs of nature and culture, and which have always covertly threatened to ‘dissolve’ and break down the entire dichotomy, raise the issue of how, or in what manners, the ‘boundaries’ of these arguably continuous and connected structures can be re-thought.

Since the authors of the contribution are two musicologists and a music psychologist, who strive to ‘deconstruct’, or at least to ‘interlock’ humanist, social and natural perspectives or divisions, the special challenge for them in this context was to put the ‘right’ questions to the composers, regarding the deliberation about their own musical creation, processes, states and positions in the space between nature and culture. On this occasion we extend our gratitude to all the creators, from the oldest to the youngest – Vladan Radovanović, Srđan Hofman, Ivana Stefanović, Vladimir Tošić, Zoran Erić, Miloš Zatkalik, Tatjana Milošević, Svetlana Savić, Ivan Brkljačić, Marko Nikodijević and Ana Gnjatović (all of whom, as it turned out, studied composition at the former Music Academy in Belgrade, now Faculty of Music) on their responding to this unusual call and presenting the readership of *New Sound* with an extraordinary opportunity not only to look through ‘open windows’ into their private creative worlds, but also to enjoy the chance of setting up an imaginary dialogue on the issue of Nature vs. Culture.

² For example, Latour’s standpoint that the fundamental structure of the modern society and discourse is the division between ‘undifferentiated material “nature”’ and ‘various human “cultures”’ led him, among other things, to the new notion of ‘natures-cultures’, which erases the meaning of all the distinctions between the ‘old’ notions of nature and culture. Furthermore, the deconstruction of the nature/culture dichotomy included the views of the ‘culturalists’ and ‘realists’, according to Soper, i.e. the distinction between ‘culturalism’ and ‘naturalism’, according to Eagleton.

Tijana Popović Mladenović, Blanka Bogunović, Ivana Perković

NATURE VERSUS CULTURE

Interview with the composer Ivan Brkljačić

1. In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?

Ivan Brkljačić: It seems to me that, if the history of human civilization did not take the course which we know today and still follow, music could indeed be seen separately as an exclusive ‘matter’ of nature. The natural in it are the laws of a musical system. Humankind throughout history has been approaching them ever more closely, then abandoning them, then revisiting them again, etc. The nature of music has existed simultaneously with the development of society, ever since its inception. And music, thanks to its laws, has remained practically unaltered all this time. However, the contexts in which music emerges, i.e. the multitude of reasons why and how it emerges, as well as the manners of its subsequent nurturing and preservation, suggest the inevitability of the cultural aspect, as a certain civilizational reference. In what ways human beings are capable of interpreting music in a particular combination of social and civilizational circumstances – this is directly related to the ‘matter’ of culture. I would say that, from the modern point of view, music must belong to both ‘matters’, placed somewhere in between, neither too close to nor too far from either of them. It lives its eternal life, in the way given to it, and humankind shapes it strictly in the measure it is allowed to.

2. Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?

I. B.: I think that the nature of music is precisely what is real and exact, what can be fathomed and explained. But I also think that, although it might seem that a lot has already been comprehended, humanity must still invest great energy and effort to reach deep into the reality and exactitude of the nature of music. The culture of music, on the other hand, can be virtual and fictitious, but not only that. Culture too can be perceived through reality and exactitude, but outside the natural musical system. Within it, there is no place for culture.

3. *If a piece of music has power 'in itself' and 'for itself', is nature principally 'responsible' for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other 'agents'?*

I. B.: As I have already said, I think that the sense of music, or rather its essence, is in its nature. The meaning – or in other words, the explanation of what music provides for us – is related to culture, context, social circumstances, civilizational development, previous experience, etc.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

I. B.: It depends on its significance. Although music by its nature does not require a story, or is not related to a story at all, history has shown that some kind of story has always been right beside music. It is still much easier for humans to determine the meaning of music using extramusical devices, which, among other things, is a story. Purely musical means, taken from the natural system of music, in the manner of the fundamental operation of music, still do not make it possible for humankind to grasp and present its true meaning. Therefore people tell stories about music. All of this means that music, on the one hand, does not need a story at all, but on the other hand, human beings do. The result of this is that music is quite often needed by the very story a human wants to tell.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound 'reside'? Where would you 'locate' your true acoustic creative 'milieu'?*

I. B.: My work with sound resides in the cultural context at the turn of the millennium. The influences are related to the culture, motives as well, implementation especially. The nature of music is a 'matter' that, not long ago, I accepted as the absolute value, reconciled myself with its existence and I do not feel the need to tamper with it. The nature of my music is a part of the overall musical nature and it progresses side by side with my attempts at shaping it the way I think I should.

6. *To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics, etc.) or performers, stimulating for your creativity?*

I. B.: The everyday context in which and for which I compose is crucial for my creation. Various acoustic and electronic media are the means, i.e. the consequence of a previously made decision about what I want or have to do.

7. *In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?*

I. B.: Refer to the answer No. 5.

8. *How would you define your primary creative engine?*

I. B.: As the creative and critical attitude towards the given context which I occupy every day. I draw primary inspiration for creativity from what surrounds me.

9. *Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?*

I. B.: On the one hand, the emotional state of contentment very often prompts me to express myself creatively, while on the other hand, I have the need to talk by means of music when I (negatively) criticize someone or something.

10. *How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?*

I. B.: I dealt with the nature of my own compositional process while I was writing *Jinx* for chamber ensemble (16 soloists). In five movements, I presented the analysis of the entire path that I usually travel when creating music. The movements' titles are as follows: 1. Enthusiasm, 2. Idea, 3. Problem, 4. Process, 5. Hope.

11. *Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?*

I. B.: In the works I have composed so far, I have used, in a certain sense, the influences of popular genres, to which I have always related as an inevitable influence of something that has been native to my ear practically since I was born, but which was not rejected by that ear (as the case was with some other genres). I never allow myself to veer off too far from the classical genre, because that would mean I am composing pop, which I have never wanted. But intertwining, taking over, flirting, the analysis of mutual boundaries, etc. has always been familiar and interesting to work with. In that respect, I sometimes

quite intentionally create music materials that resemble those from popular genres, yet sometimes I quite intentionally avoid them.

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

I. B.: That depends on the actual materials. I am still not sure that I have a clear ‘recipe’ for forming my musical materials and their further treatment. I still approach each material as if it were the first I have ever written and I relate to it in the given context of the creative moment. This can involve a lot of external influences, which preferably are consciously accepted or dismissed. I have the impression that it is exactly this attitude towards materials and their further treatment that contributes to my compositional-poetical method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia. But I usually leave that judgment to others.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what way and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

I. B.: No answer.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

I. B.: In my opinion, it is impossible to ‘pollute’ the nature of music. It surely exists as a parallel reality and nothing can harm it. Acoustic polluters of culture are at every turn around us. No matter where you look, you can see them: television, radio, show business, the streets, the Internet, various institutions, etc. However, although they might be invisible at the moment, I claim that there are filters of acoustic polluters, which are positively more powerful than the polluters themselves and which will, in retrospect after a certain amount of time, discard what proves to be unworthy of civilization. These filters have always existed, and they do exist today.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

I. B.: The period around the 1950s has undoubtedly led to a certain culmination in the domain of musical creativity, as well as in the domain of the quality and meaning of musical expression. I am not completely sure whether it paved the way for euphony and structural richness because, in my opinion, they

have existed before. However, it is certain that this period caused severe reactions in the stylistic orientations of later composers and in musical performance, whilst the only right path was paved by various forms of new technologies in music.

16. If the 'arrow of music history' has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?

I. B.: I am not sure how to answer this question. If everything were absurd and if there were no prospects, composers would have changed their occupation long ago. But, fortunately, that has not happened yet (at least not predominantly). By its quality, music today shows that we are living in some kind of echo of Post-Modernism, when someone is expected to take responsibility and initiate something new, thus reorienting the 'arrow of music history' in a new direction. This 'new direction' does not mean 'the right path', nor does it mean that what we are living on today is the wrong path – it is simply a new direction. The way I see it, we are currently living in, as D. Gostuški put it, a 'boundary zone', which in our present time has been going on for almost twenty years. The end of the previous and the beginning of the new might be very close, or we could wait a little longer for a few more generations to come of age. But undoubtedly, the new will come. What it will be, I do not know...

17. Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the 'survival' of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?

I. B.: The compositional system and the stylistic traits of a compositional poetic are, in my opinion, obsolete nowadays. There are no exemplary composers, nor opuses which would show how to compose and how not to compose. Importance today is ascribed to composers' individual projects and to measuring the autonomous value of these projects, irrespective of other compositions. Today, the poetic of a single author contains diversities that used to exist not between two contemporaries, but between two styles. Regarding this, I think the key adjustment is related to the given temporal and spatial context in which one works, and which is valid for a single composition. The next one will set

its own rules, causing a new adjustment. Of course, one should always keep in mind, even in the slightest measure, the target group for which the composed music is intended. Still, the most important, ultimately, is what is heard. All of the above leads to the conclusion that the survival of music is anyway unquestionable.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

I. B.: Absolutely yes. But it does depend on various combinations of circumstances. While we are alive, we can influence the way in which, generally speaking, our music is taken care of. After we die, it is in the hands of others. As long as it is in someone's hands, it means that we remain alive too, through what we created.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

I. B.: I almost never think about that. Biology would certainly burden my creativity, and experience helps me in certain situations, and so I resort to it on occasion.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

I. B.: Actually no. I am more committed to trying to present the biological and cultural determinants of the compositional community I am a part of, together with other members, to other communities, in the best possible light.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

I. B.: Yes. As I have already said, this is related to the emotional state of contentment and the critical need to express what is happening around me. Discontent, rage, disbelief, injustice, but also pleasure, an amorous moment or a joyful day have largely oriented my personal energy towards the initial materials, and consequently to shaping them into completed works.

Interview with the composer Zoran Erić

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

Z. Erić: The nature of music is in its power and beauty – in other words, in its content in the broadest sense. The culture of music is comprehended in the manner of its formalization or formulation, and in the meaning within the context of its presentation.

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

Z. E.: I think it is the other way round. The nature of music should (mostly) be what is elusive and what cannot be retold in it. So, the nature of music is a fiction. The culture of music is what is exact and real in it.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

Z. E.: When we speak of the sense and power of music, we primarily think of its content, and we imply that it is its nature too. Culture formulates the musical content (the musical nature) and it is responsible (to a great extent) for its meaning.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

Z. E.: Music does not need a story if it *tells a good story*. When a story *tells a good story*, it does not need music. Therefore, music is more necessary for *telling a good story*, but a story is more necessary for music.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?*

Z. E.: It is certainly a realm where nature and culture cannot be differentiated and separated during the very act of creation. When everything is completed, it is very easy to determine what the nature, and what the culture of the musical substance is.

6. *To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?*

Z. E.: To the utmost extent. There are some other stimulations too, but compared to the said ones, they are actually their derivatives.

7. *In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?*

Z. E.: No answer.

8. *How would you define your primary creative engine?*

Z. E.: As a need for the occasional articulation of the acoustic space that 'resides' in and around me.

9. *Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?*

Z. E.: It is indeterminate (the drive). What is determinate is just the need to reduce emotional tensions of various origins and intensities.

10. *How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?*

Z. E.: Very simply. There is only one compositional process and only one good strategy that will turn the idea into a work (of art). The search for this compositional process and this strategy is a procedure worth describing or analyzing only when the outcome is indeed a work of art. At any rate, this happens when someone (other than the author) ascertains that the creative product is an artwork. Then everyone can recognize and state the procedures that led to it.

11. *Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they*

do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

Z. E.: I start with a particular sound. I am not interested in its ‘identity’. I am interested in its features and the degree of compatibility with my acoustic presumptions in the case at hand. It is only important whether I hear what a certain sound will ‘do’ in the music which I create, and when. Everything else will appear in the form of a composition as the consequence of such a selection of the acoustic *material*.

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

Z. E.: No answer.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what way and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

Z. E.: As objects of observation, as globally accepted facts which, under changed circumstances and in a changed environment, can be disputed or proved. ‘Ready-made’ content is most advantageously quoted in its unnatural setting. It is best recognized in it, and there is also the possibility (usually an intention too) that such an absorbed meaning should be – reinterpreted. That is a good outcome. Then we create a milieu for global acceptance of ‘revised ready-made’.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

Z. E.: Polluters are always the same. They are universal although they sometimes change shape, so it is more difficult to spot them at once. When you poison nature, you have poisoned everything that could emerge from nature. For example – culture. We should not be exposed to these acoustic poisons at a tender age when our culture is being created and developed, because ‘the immune system’ is still underdeveloped and incapable of defending the organism from the incurable form of this disease. The environment in which I was living did not allow for this disease to represent any kind of danger for my musical (and my general, mental) health.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

Z. E.: No answer.

16. *If the 'arrow of music history' has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

Z. E.: No answer.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the 'survival' of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

Z. E.: No answer.

18. *Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?*

Z. E.: No. Not at all and by no means.

19. *In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?*

Z. E.: I take pains to not let them direct these processes at all. Both biology and experience are categories that should be consciously put aside (however and whenever possible) during the act of creation. This releases the creative process.

20. *Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?*

Z. E.: I do not think they do. Or else I am not aware of it. I think that serious creativity always includes a *code* for erasing these determinants. However, they can (sometimes) be activated to a significant extent by circumstances.

21. *Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?*

Z. E.: Such moments, periods and states are in the nature of every creation.

You cannot avoid them, they need not be resisted. You become aware of them when they pass and/or when someone points to them. In my case, they were marked by the social (political) upheavals in the country I lived in. These upheavals swooped down on the act of creation with such intensity and to such a degree that at some moments they governed it.

Interview with the composer Ana Gnjatović

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

A. Gnjatović: The matter of nature existing (only) through the matters of culture?

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

A. G.: I will go with mirrors.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

A. G.: I guess the sense is perceived through meaning, or we create sense by the meaning we ascribe or add to it. I do not know if certain music has power in itself and for itself, and I definitely cannot accept the utterly abused division into music that we react to with our *gut*, which thus *has an effect*, is *sincere* and *powerful*, and music we react to with our *head*, which thus *has no proper effect*, is cerebral and manipulative.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

A. G.: Music needs a story more. Story needs music most often just as a figure of speech, as the means of emotional marketing. Still, I think interdependence is not something predetermined. The story is forced on music (the story not necessarily understood as a narrative, but as a kind of extramusical or super-musical reading, the adjunction of sense), either by the person writing it (creating, composing, performing) or by the person reading it (performing, listening) so that it could be understood, talked about, remembered.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound 'reside'? Where would you 'locate' your true acoustic creative 'milieu'?*

A. G.: In the human breath (nature?) and in the word i.e. speech (culture?).

6. *To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?*

A. G.: The choice of instruments I write for encourages the creation and influences it largely, from the development of the very idea of the sound I want to achieve, to defining the expressive and technical possibilities of the apparatus, to thinking about the tradition of the use of that apparatus. The choice of performers I write for is often fictitious, and hence it remains in the domain of ideal representation. When the performer is known to me, I strive to find some mutual incentive.

7. *In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?*

A. G.: What makes me initially interested/inspired probably originates both from nature and culture. I think the choice and formulation of the idea/concept are a matter of culture. The design of the music material, the sound that is specifically *mine* (a sound formula, melodic-rhythmic model, any kind of specific unit that undergoes further manipulation), probably originates in (my) nature. I think that the very substance of music, as what fundamentally distinguishes one individual creativity from another and one work from another, is the strongest and most valuable intervention of nature.

8. *How would you define your primary creative engine?*

A. G.: I do not know. Curiosity, self-importance, fascination, spite.

9. *Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?*

A. G.: First, being absorbed in play. While working – often nervousness, anxiety, impatience. In the final stages of composing – playfulness again.

10. *How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?*

A. G.: For example: I am looking at Klee's drawings. I imagine a moving image, most often quite simple, a dynamic visual structure. Let us say, a series of parallel lines that pass through a surface. I add sounds to the lines and I add sounds to the surface. I decide which lines become reflected and which ones keep passing through the surface, where the surface yields and where it fractures. I try to conceive what I have not imagined. I try to conceive how the lines that penetrate become thinner and turn into strings of points, the lines that are reflected become curved and turn into spiral forms, to which, on the other hand, the said points stick and... I realize that my formal sections are poorly connected and that I lack the natural musical breath; for a moment I leave visual structures aside and start dealing with the acoustic ones. I struggle for a while and then I comprehend that my music is developing quite nicely if it indulges in the visually impossible.

11. *Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?*

A. G.: Apart from wind, I am afraid that I seldom come across sounds of nature, or at least they seldom draw my attention. Voice and speech inspire me considerably and shape the materials I deal with. A particular phrase, pattern or idea borrowed from popular (or just any) music is sometimes, although not often, a convenient inducement, like a conversation topic. Other sounds I encounter mostly *serve* as remote or immediate associations; I use them as a kind of cliché (not so much while writing music, but rather when explaining what is written) without actually incorporating them into the musical material.

12. *What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?*

A. G.: I think I deal with quite simple things, trite even. I try to follow the breath – the breath as the measure of a phrase, as the rhythm of interchange, breathing in and breathing out, as the natural flow of thinking, as the natural flow of speech. Also, in my music, I try to deal with relationships that I also deal with outside music – communication between two people, between one and many, with oneself.

13. *Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?*

A. G.: The answer is beyond me. I think my music absorbs all sorts of things.

14. *In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?*

A. G.: Various background noises, most of all those of electronic appliances, but not only those. I think I developed a need to change silence, as the background for acoustic events, for wide, static, tremulous acoustic drones, and yet to use silence not as an acoustic content but as a sound effect.

15. *Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?*

A. G.: I think complicatedness is a historic euphemism for when various musical disciplines become specialized. The development of media has significantly contributed to the development of music (and, at the same time, left it slightly wondering about itself).

16. *If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

A. G.: I think that managerial strategies will nevertheless be crucial in the future. I see the prospects in the careful choice and creative combination of successful examples of theatrical, multimedia and popular music practices. I have my doubts about that *arrow* and *way*; I do not think that music, after the transition from the industrial to post-industrial society, has been left much more *confused* than any other art or any other kind of social activity in general.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

A. G.: The adaptation of the system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions will not be required any time soon, but I am of the opinion that it is very desirable. Music as a social activity is becoming more and more anachronistic. As if it is growing into the result of satisfying imaginary, supposed social needs, instead into an echo of the society, of the environment in which and for which it is created.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

A. G.: I do not think it is important.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

A. G.: To be honest, I do not react to changes of weather and seasons, I often do not even realize whether I am cold or sleepy, and so my knowledge about biology and physiology and their influence on me does not extend far. The experience of previous creations and experience as everything that has been learned in the meantime – I most sincerely hope that it does influence my creativity.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

A. G.: Probably the biological ones, but they are unfathomable to me, and so I cannot (do not want to) pay attention to them consciously. Cultural ones – I hope not. I am not in favour of dividing creation into men's and women's writing. I am not ready to accept that my creation is stipulated by sex/gender.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

A. G.: I cannot pinpoint one decisive moment, or more, that defined or oriented my creative path in a certain way. I think that the content of music is *coloured* by all my experiences. I do not refuse the connection between the development of my music and the development of my being, but since I cannot view composing as an isolated activity, I cannot select clear examples of immediate interaction, either.

Interview with the composer Srđan Hofman

1. In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?

Srđan Hofman: Sound exists as a natural, physical phenomenon – irrespective of whether a living creature can perceive it with its sense of hearing. The ability to perceive one part of that physical phenomenon, the ability to discern different sounds and to interpret the information about the environment conveyed by sound to human beings (and many other animal species), are also completely ‘a matter of nature’.

Naturally, the building material of music is also sound. Thus, music could not be possible if there were no sound, no sense of hearing and no processing of acoustic information in the brain. But the intentional production of series of sounds organized in units that also made sense to other members of a group (clan, tribe...) took place within a particular culture. Music emerged, changed and developed its expressive means exclusively within a culture, primarily in two interrelated ways:

a) human beings gradually mastered the skill of the precise ‘fabrication’ of sounds for their music (the ever more complex making of musical instruments, increasing adeptness at playing on them, the development of special vocal techniques);

b) ‘permissible’ acoustic (tonal) content and formal principles underlying a musical tissue were established.

I stress that here I take the notion of culture in its broadest possible sense: as the cumulative sum of confrontations and permeations in a complex interweaving of various historically conditioned and geographically located ‘traditional’ cultures, layers of subcultures present simultaneously in one place or in one social (national) community, as well as the rate of multicultural and trans-cultural processes.

2. Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?

S. H.: From my answer to the previous question, it can already be concluded that I see ‘the culture of music’ as completely real and exact. At the moment of performance, music is definitely not virtual, but an acoustic fact made by the creative effort of an individual within the given parameters of his or her culture and by breaking the boundaries of these parameters. The reception of music is an individual act, and maybe, to an extent, it does not coincide with the real content of the work, but besides the psychological characteristics and current mood of the listener, it is also conditioned by the culture (subculture) which the listener belongs to.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

S. H.: I think that culture is ‘responsible’ both for the *sense* and for the *meaning* of music. Thereby, the *sense* of music is permanently related to the culture of the time and the place where the work has come into being, while the *meaning* of that work can change or get lost during a migration to a geographically and/or chronologically different culture. However, the *sense* of a musical work can also be ‘lost in translation’ in another, fundamentally disparate culture. Although objectively present in a work, that sense will not be consciously understood by the recipients who are not capable of discovering the culture-conditioned ‘regularities’, unknown to them, which build that sense.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

S. H.: The context of this question does not specify what you imply by the notion of ‘story’: a literary form, the synopsis of a film or a theatre play, the summary of a book, the musicological analysis of a composition, an essay about a work, a critical review... Or do you simply mean the relationship between text and music in vocal and vocal-instrumental pieces written after a literary work, or in ‘programme music’? Not to mention the fact that the issue of the degree of that mutual *need* of music and story can also be projected to the ‘forces of attraction’ between the agents of the musical and extramusical ‘setting’ in general.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?*

S. H.: If we agree that music, in a certain sense, belongs both to nature and culture, then working with sound, with its appropriate parameters, procedures,

segments and functions, is inseparable from them. And within the scope of that, my acoustic milieu is mainly explorative.

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

S. H.: Discovering the specific qualities of acoustic features of instruments, voices and their relationship, creating electronically generated sounds and the processing of ‘natural’ sounds of the environment – have a fundamental influence on shaping my musical ideas. In order to make compositional decisions, I even rely on imagining the act of performance of the (future) composition, most often including visualizations of certain musicians and their distinctive movements, or even the appearance and acoustics of a real concert hall in which I imagine them ‘perform’.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you ‘read’ the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

S. H.: Creating sounds, processes within them and ‘responses’ to them is conditioned and limited by the natural laws of acoustics and psychoacoustics. The human ability to perceive the complex interweaving of textural layers rich in acoustic information is also ‘naturally’ limited, although it can be developed by exercise. What do we hear as the sum, once we are no longer able to hear the elements constituting that sum? For how long can we pay close attention while listening, if we require relaxation caused by the simplification of the texture and the dilation of musical time, static moments...? These are some questions I try to answer both intuitively and experimentally, both rationally and irrationally, and which are, in my opinion, ‘determinants of nature’ in the process of my musical creation.

The content, the meaning of the music I compose is conditioned by the totality of the music which I am familiar with and which I listen to; it is in a certain relationship with the compositional procedures of various composers whose works I have analyzed in my life; it is influenced by ideas developed in other arts, etc. Regarding the culture I belong to, it is certain that impulses from its segments which are close to me, yet which I do not even think about while composing, influence my compositional decisions in an irrational way.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

S. H.: It is difficult to define the ‘primary one’. Sometimes I am motivated by my personal experience of an artwork (a painting, sculpture, verse, film scene), which I try to reconstruct in the domain of sound, sometimes by an ambient sound, or a sound event I hear, or an instrumental combination (when I have a ‘predetermined’ ensemble)... Sometimes, a musical idea or a ‘motivic’ core induces me to fashion a musical tissue...

9. *Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?*

S. H.: If I possess such a dominant drive at all, I am not aware of it.

10. *How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?*

S. H.: I usually start with a vague vision of the future composition’s contours, but while working on it, the musical material itself opens a space to me for different structuring, for new ideas...

For example, ‘accompanying’ layers, which I build around the skeleton material in order to create acoustic information that is distinctive, complex and polished to a high gloss, sometimes strike me as possible ‘main’ layers, capable of evolutionary development.

11. *Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?*

S. H.: Sounds that I hear around me have for a long time played an important role in the formation of musical materials for my compositions. From the first bars of *Refren* [*Refrain*] for wind quintet, where the ‘model’ (the sound of a steel cable pounding on a mast) cannot be recognized at all, to the electronically created faithful reconstruction of certain natural sounds (in the composition *Déjà vu*), to taking over – either in a genuine or modified state – ‘prefabricated’ samples of natural and culturally mediated sound.

12. *What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?*

S. H.: It might be fashioning acoustic layers of substantial duration which, beside conceivable complexity and micro-changes in their structures, can ap-

pear to be a single unified acoustic field which is easily perceived. Secondly, it is the reduction of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic material to a handful of basic ‘motives’ that in some shape are repeated throughout the composition.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

S. H.: I sometimes employ musical patterns that might, due to their frequent use, be defined as ready-made. These patterns – highly stylized and differently illuminated, although still partly recognizable – play the role of reference to some other (extramusical) meaning which we anticipate, but do not fully comprehend.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

S. H.: Acoustic ‘polluters’ can be loud noises of traffic, construction sites, sports grounds, etc. which disturb concentrated work, thinking, conversation, sleep... Loud (or even quiet) music can also pollute the space around which it spreads – and this can be just any kind of music, provided it is not performed (broadcast) to be listened to consensually by a group of people in a given period of time, but rather imposed as an acoustic background. Using music as a décor, whose role is to contribute to creating a ‘pleasant’ ambiance – or as an agreeable acoustic sensation to accompany drudgery or some other activity – pollutes, however, the culture of listening, because it implies paying superficial attention to music, or even a complete lack thereof. To meet this assignment, music turns into a *music industry* that must adapt its content, structure and form to the manner of consuming it. On the other hand, to maximize the profit, it must incite in the consumer the strongest possible need for its products, with the ‘guarantee’ that their use will not require the excessive expenditure of ‘quality’ time and intellectual energy.

The differences between an industrial product and an artisan product, as well as between the respective products of design, applied art and fine art are clear. Regarding music, however, under the umbrella-notion of *culture and art* in our midst during the last two decades, the boundaries between amateurism and professionalism, between show business and artistry, between an industrial product and a work of art have been erased. This led to the pollution of the perception and reception of the works of artistic music, and the contribution of cultural policies, schools, printed and electronic media to this process is certainly not negligible.

The consequence of the described situation is a serious deficiency in the material and organizational support of the society to performing and recording new works of artistic music. The influence of this state of affairs to my creation made me give up composing for large ensembles.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

S. H.: The complexity of avant-garde music in the period you mention, which sometimes surpassed the capacity of human beings (the performer and the listener, and even the composer) to perceive and follow the events in a musical tissue, raised the issue of what the limits are which music – in order to remain an art that can be heard, comprehended and experienced as an intentionally organized acoustic event – cannot afford to exceed. However, precisely this ‘overflow’ over the boundaries of sonorities which a composer, while working on a composition, can imagine, relying on the experience acquired by the sense of hearing – and which is caused by the serial technique, aleatory music or electronic equipment – permits the discovery, in a practical way, of where those boundaries actually are and how far they can be extended. Thus, the post-avant-garde composers, drawing from what they already heard, had an opportunity to search for paths towards functional structural richness and some new kind of euphony.

16. If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?

S. H.: I do not think that music has gotten lost in some ‘gap between poetics and aesthesia’: good music is being created even today and exists in the most diverse manifestations.

Gifted creators choose, consciously or not, musical materials and compositional procedures that are familiar to them, natural, the easiest to express with, and conceivably the best suited to communicate with the kind of listeners who matter to them. And if they are interested in what sort of music has prospects in the sense of ‘what will be the trend in music in a few years’, they should follow the developments in visual arts. New orientations in visual arts, which have been drawing media attention, have usually, at least so far, anticipated occurrences in music.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the 'survival' of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

S. H.: The life of every human being follows its course in the conditions that are contemporary for him or her, though these 'conditions' are defined by the culture (and subculture) that this person belongs to. We do not choose the historical period, or the social class, or the culture, or the place where we grow up, yet all of that is an integral part of our personality. Thus, certain adaptations to the conditions in which a composer creates are completely natural, probable and involuntary, and at the same time individually 'faceted'.

Every art, including music, is limited by the properties of the human senses and our mental capabilities. If it exceeds them – it becomes absurd. The 'transposition' of a Bach fugue to the ultrasonic range (which is technically feasible) or a complete blackout in a room where Rembrandt's paintings are exhibited would make these works non-existent for the listener/viewer. On the other hand, sensory acuity differs from person to person, as well as perceptive and reasoning abilities. Experience and specific advance knowledge are also necessary to comprehend and experience a work of art. Without them, the 'compositional system' cannot be perceived, be it a complex Renaissance polyphony, Wagnerian web of leitmotifs, the way of 'reading' Haydn in Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, or the serial technique. The adjustment you speak of is definitely necessary, but the questions remain against what kind of listener it is gauged, and whether the work contains a layer which is 'the first', and effective, in spite of the work being 'incomprehensible' for the majority of listeners.

18. *Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?*

S. H.: No, I do not.

19. *In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?*

S. H.: Biology probably influences my creative process in a certain way which eludes me, while experience helps me tremendously to avoid 'ticking over' while working, and to recognize if the time is right to abandon the implementation of an idea.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

S. H.: I do not think so.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

S. H.: University studies, i.e. the condensed time of the most intense learning and adoption of the most diverse knowledge, is nevertheless the origin of developmental processes in my compositional creation, of its changes and the ever increasing complexity of its orientations. The content of my music is coloured by my personal listening experience, related both to musical works and to disorganized, 'random' sound.

Interview with the composer Tatjana Milošević

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

Tatjana Milošević: Nature in music can be viewed only as substance. The matter of culture in music is, in the broadest sense, musical theory i.e. speaking about music. Music is primarily a matter of culture, because a bird does not recognize its chirruping as music, but human culture does.

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

T. M.: The real and the exact also belong to culture. Culture reveals reality and exactitude in music as their nature.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

T. M.: At any rate, only the culture. The nature is ‘non-rhetorical’; it has no meaning whatsoever, and music can explain itself and its own products only through rhetorical knowledge. Only culture has the ability of self-explaining.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

T. M.: Music does not need story at all.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?*

T. M.: No answer.

6. *To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?*

T. M.: Until recently, ensembles/instruments were not relevant stimulations for my creativity, because I would always start by composing thematic material on the piano or in a short score. The exceptions are compositions where the ensemble is predetermined. The choice of appropriate medium that will be best suited for the thematic material is normally the second stage of my composing. However, sometimes a new musical idea was initially inspired by the acoustic possibilities of a certain ensemble of instrument, but I would very soon deviate from it, more or less. A certain timbre can initiate the creative process, but that is definitely not a rule in my case.

7. *In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?*

T. M.: No answer.

8. *How would you define your primary creative engine?*

T. M.: The need to research/shape/substantiate musical contents.

9. *Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes, most often?*

T. M.: Only the positive emotional drives, e.g. the feeling of contentment. As a rule, negative emotions hold me back, both in life and in creativity.

10. *How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?*

T. M.:

- The musical idea.
- Researching its potentials (partitioning into segments, analysis of its components and possibilities of creating interference with other musical ideas, or between its segments).
- Determining its authenticity (whether it directly follows from something that already exists or just generally... if it is a reference to some known poetic, composition etc., it is no reason at all for me to give up, just the need to become aware of its affiliation, 'locality').

- Work on the thematic material derived from the initial musical idea, and which includes its formal shaping as the exploration of its possible manifestations in the background, middle ground and foreground of the composition.
- Orchestration.

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

T. M.: Various extramusical contents, openly accessible in the environment, constantly influence the creation of my music and are highly inspirational to me. The most interesting are those that draw my attention because of the irregular flow of acoustic events within a unit of time and minimal variance in the repetition of an acoustic pattern.

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

T. M.: The ways of lending recognition to a musical material are guided by the particular inherent characteristics of the material itself and it is almost impossible to ‘choose’ a certain manner of ‘shaping’ in order to increase accessibility of any kind.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

T. M.: Among the genres in the category of musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods, I have used blues and jazz, with the intention of creating a kind of ‘genetic splice’ of popular and artistic music by synthesizing them with my own music. Apart from the desire to experiment with various musical parameters and to either find or dispute ‘the new’, this creative ambition also stems from the consciously present aspiration to achieve better communication with the audience.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

T. M.: If ‘polluters’ denote what is harmful, then we can speak only of the violation of the decibel limit. I think that ‘harmful’ in art does not exist. Soci-

ologists of culture have spoken about ‘kitsch’ and ‘trash’, but nowadays these notions rather belong to an antiquated philosophical jargon, while in fact they have lost their meaning. The contemporary school of thought dismisses them, and rightly so. After ‘camp’ it is impossible to speak of ‘kitsch’.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

T. M.: No answer.

6. If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?

T. M.: Almost all known compositional strategies have prospects if they cooperate with the musical content they substantiate, except for the twelve-tone technique that, I would say, completely eliminates all authenticity.

17. Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?

T. M.: No answer.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

T. M.: Cause and consequence are exchanged in this question, because an awareness of ‘transcending the biological limits of a human life’ can be reached only through creation. As the Gnostics claim, it is necessary to transcend the corporeal and material status to reach an idea.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

T. M.: Certain contemporary philosophers claim that experience is ‘destroyed’ and replace that notion with ‘recollection’. Reality today is so ‘fragmented’ that it cannot admit ‘experience’ as we have known it until recently.

If 'biology' denotes parameters such as 'age' or 'health', I still have had no opportunity to become aware of changes that would serve as the ground for comparison. Experience (recollection) shows that great works have often been created in spite of biology. Would Beethoven be a better composer if he did not become deaf?

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

T. M.: Sex and gender (by 'gender' I understand 'heritage') undoubtedly influence my creation. However, everything influences creation and it is impossible to tell what, when and to what extent. I would like to remind you of a witty remark by Laurence Sterne, who said that 'a writer is not the same before and after shaving'.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

T. M.: Certain 'moments in my life' that influenced and 'coloured' my creation probably exist, but they are so varied and intertwined with other influences, often in the domain of the unconscious, that it is very difficult to recognize and define them.

Interview with the composer Marko Nikodijević

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

Marko Nikodijević: The representation of nature is already a matter of culture. Thus music is also a matter of culture.

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

M. N.: Communicating vessels that govern each other. A harmonic series is a physical fact. Without a musical context – *only* a physical fact.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

M. N.: I am not sure that music ‘in itself’ exists. To paraphrase Bojana Cvejić, music is the ‘rhetoric of figures of speech’, i.e. of predetermined lexical, syntactical, structural units. Maybe I am just an obsolete post-structuralist who, outside language and the social conditions of language, does not see the forest for the trees.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

M. N.: The story seems to me to be a later-stage symptom in the development of music. Its original sense of a ritual is, provisionally put, its ‘nature’. After poetry stops and before metaphysics begins.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?*

M. N.: Given my dealing with algorithmic music, sound synthesis, live electronics – it is in digital reality. But that also means in sampling – therefore,

the inexhaustible acoustic reality of the entire recorded history of music and non-European musical cultures. In the sense of a primary aesthetic milieu, my music originates from techno and techno-aesthetics.

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

M. N.: They stimulate as much as they limit. And in a limited space, everything is the ability of the imagination (though not a necessity, unfortunately). However, access to the European performing elite and continuous collaboration with it is an immense motivation, and the spectacular development of digital technology in the last decade is a boundless composing ground.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

M. N.: My approach to composing is meditative – intuitive actions become a part of the general logic of composing, and the other way round. Also, the very long process of the meditation and mental sketching of a composition is most often emptied in the very short and intense process of composing itself and fixing the score and/or electronic sound. Its further delimitation exactly into cultural and natural layers is impossible for me – not because I mystify the composing itself, but because I see the act of composing as an integral process within such a spiral of decisions.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

M. N.: Techno.

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes, most often?

M. N.: No answer.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

M. N.: As being oriented towards searching for the right sound – not in the essentialist sense of obsolete aesthetic notions about an original genius from the late 1800s, but in the sense that all compositional processes are subordinated

to the quest for a unique acoustic reality (whose one parameter, apart from the acoustic aura, is its conceptual orientation). Digital technology is just a tool that makes it possible either to fathom the depths of a sound structure or to create a kind of organized acoustic structure which surpasses the possibilities of immediate sound imagination. Too many composers are limited either by imagining the score, or by their own improvisational technique at the piano, or by front-end use of digital technology.

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

M. N.: Every acoustic input that appears to me as suitable for composing is a possible material, regardless of its 'history' or origination technique (or maybe because of it).

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

M. N.: The equilibrium of structural design and acoustic aura is my paradigmatic space of desired beauty and sense.

13. Provided your music 'absorbs' them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical 'ready-made' cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

M. N.: In the same way as every sample. We must keep in mind that for the first time in history, thanks to digitalization and the Internet, literally the entire archive of history is at our disposal. In that respect, the attitude towards such a 'Borgesian' archive of the world is one of my preoccupations: roughly speaking, only now is Post-Modernism technologically possible.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic 'polluters' of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

M. N.: I am not sure whether the very idea about polluting culture/nature with sounds is a mere self-delusion of some circles in high culture after the shift of public attention towards some parts of popular culture.

Imagining silence is sometimes more important than actual silence. After all, everyone who spent 20 minutes in an isolation booth knows how frightening silence can be.

15. *Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?*

M. N.: I do not know if one can speak of the gradation of euphony and structural richness from the historical aspect. That would require the synchrony of the entire history of music (which is, in itself, a very interesting concept).

16. *If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

M. N.: I do not belong to the circle of mournful composers and I think that the ‘downfall’ of music is an eternal mirage – even Adorno, Brahms, Schubert wrote about it. If we go further back in time, we would probably come across the downfall of music since the moment when music started to separate from a ritual and became an authored work.

It is a thankless task to predict the future, and also the best way to be wrong. I believe that great potential lies in the possibilities of digital technology – starting with computer-aided composing, acousmatic music, live electronics, to the global library of history preserved on the World Wide Web. Regarding that, I think that in the coming age of hyperinformation, the strategy of processing a huge amount of data will be a part of some compositional technique of the present and the future.

As a listener, I am most interested in poetics that are exterritorial.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

M. N.: Personal style and the Barthesian Author are dead, but music is not. Regarding the problems of a perceptive nature and the rate of information density, I see them rather as secondary manifestations of inferior compositional skill and imagination, most often cloaked by ideology. A great number of artworks operate with an enormous amount of information. That still does not constitute a statement about a work of art, but is only a description of its external particulars (in relation to our perceptive apparatus).

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

M. N.: Only in terms that a certain work of music will become a part of the collective memory once its creators are gone, but that is a very small part of music. Admittedly, maybe a new time is coming when we will also find out more about the less known music practices of previous ages, non-European music traditions, etc. To what extent it will become a part of the collective canon, I do not know, given that the very idea of the collective canon is obsolete.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

M. N.: No answer.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

M. N.: Surely, but I do not believe I can ‘become aware’ of this part of my own existence.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences ‘colour’ the content of music you create?

M. N.: The moments of gradual (or sudden) crystallization and conceptual clarity within agglomerated ‘sediments of experience’.

Interview with the composer Vladan Radovanović

1. In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?

Vladan Radovanović: This question necessarily includes the historical dimension, as well as the issue of origin: was it nature or culture that caused the emergence of the first organized sounds? Although this might resemble the aporia about the chicken and the egg, it is clear that the first cause cannot be culture, because in that case the issue moves further back in the past about which it is still impossible to learn anything more. We are left with the possibility of rationalistic assumption about some moment long ago, when only the prerequisites existed: the appropriate human sense and the impulse for demonstration. Then, it is more likely that the emitting of some voices and the excitation of sounds occurred accidentally, with the desire to repeat that experience, while it is not probable that the first ‘deviser’ of sounds previously had some ‘idea’ about their organization. Therefore, I believe that nature should be ‘credited’ with the inception of that tentative music, and later, while the formation of culture is in full swing – this is the impression drawn from my own introspection – nature still provides and develops the categorical psychological prerequisites: musical abilities, complementary abilities to carry out intentions and decisions, propensities, while culture offers various ways of coding and the patterns of acoustic structures. Since the effects of nature and culture are categorical, they cannot be compared either quantitatively or qualitatively.

2. Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?

V. R.: Here the term ‘nature’ is used in a different meaning from above. The notion of the nature of music here includes the general, permanent and essential characteristics of music, conceptual determinants that might be a part of the definition of music. In my opinion, the more some phenomenon is conceptualized, the less it exists in reality. Music really exists only when we listen

to a certain musical work, i.e. when the work exists in the mode of ‘becoming a sound’. Hence, since the nature of music is in a state of notion, music there exists generally instead of really – or if you like: it exists fictively, but in the meaning of being imagined. However, in the case of the nature of music, this notion certainly refers to music itself. The culture of music is also in the state of notion, but – since its quintessence is the nurturing, cultivation and improvement of a phenomenon – it is a notion that does not concern music directly, but rather its furtherance. Thus, in relation to music, it is intermediary and even more generalized, and so it does not seem appropriate to me to view the nature and the culture of music as a metaphor of two mirrors that reflect each other.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

V. R.: First of all, I find it problematic that music should really exist when it exists either ‘in itself’ or ‘for itself’. I cannot know anything about its existence in the capacity of *musica mundana*, or in the world of ideas. In fact, when it is not sounding and does not exist really – it can exist only in the mode of possibility, in an improper form, as a collection of conditional markings or signal traces, but even as such it represents only a possibility of music ‘for us’. All the more so, when it really exists in its acoustic state, it exists only as music ‘for us’.

I do not know what distinctions you make between ‘sense’ and ‘meaning’ – for me, the first relationship between the sign (I do not adhere to Saussure!) and the signified is more general because it suggests very general terms: permanence, temporality, process, infinity, motion, constancy, etc. Meaning as a relationship between the sign and the signified includes species concepts that are more concrete.

Finally, it seems that here you use the term ‘nature’ perhaps in the third meaning: as something given, something that we come upon, that is not made by humans. Be that as it may, I would say that nature involuntarily ‘offers’ phenomena that we can ‘devise’, and culture offers phenomena already devised, but which can also be revised.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

V. R.: I accept your personification tentatively, but I do not know what you are referring to: whether to the story and music as the media of single-media arts, or as simultaneous components of a multimedia art. I shall answer as if it were the former. I do not think that they can do anything with one another. The

story can fully survive without music, and even if it needed music – it could only mention it, instead of fundamentally dealing with it because (tone) music is untellable. As for (tone) music – even if it needed a story for some reason, it cannot tell it because it is incapable of transmitting meanings through tones.

5. Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound 'reside'? Where would you 'locate' your true acoustic creative 'milieu'?

V. R.: The acoustic 'milieu' of creation, in the sense of space populated with phenomena related to my musical (tone) work, is an immense imaginary museum of music under the wing of culture. Also, to a lesser extent, another milieu consists of natural scenes, especially cosmic ones, which sometimes through synaesthesia are transformed into sonorities.

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

V. R.: It is beyond doubt that certain sound sources in some cases stimulate my creativity. In principle, I know that a similar stimulus can originate from a performer too, but personally I did not have such experiences.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

V. R.: The answer to this question is related to the answer to the first question. I think that the crucial determinants of nature (now in the first meaning) are a musical ear, memory, lasting focus, intelligence and, above all, talent as a complex competence whose fundamental feature is spontaneous or intentional imagining of acoustic phantasms. The determinants of culture are the dimension of height (it is not desirable for a culture to be reduced just to an extensive 'oil spill' of subculture), its accessibility and, very important, the possibility of active participation in it.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

V. R.: My primary creative engines are the existence of the pinnacle of musical culture and the inspiration that in a predominantly spontaneous manner engenders *audisions* (acoustic phantasms).

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes, most often?

V. R.: As far as I can self-comprehend it, the only emotional cause of initiating a creative process is when the ‘fused’ manifestation of sound and emotion is initialized internally. F. T. Vischer wrote something similar about this.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

V. R.: Since my music is rarely commissioned, I leave the initialization of the process of music creation mostly to impulsiveness and spontaneity. The process usually begins by an *audision* and by looking for its correspondences in the acoustic material. Audisions sometimes occur even in later stages of the realization of the work – almost without the influence of the conative sphere of my mind – and they are bypassed by ‘attentive listening’, i.e. by striving to ‘hear’ what the previous sonority requires as the follow-up. These effects are at the same time intertwined with the intentions and decisions to lend a certain ‘appearance’ to the structure.

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming of the musical material in your compositions?

V. R.: It seems to me that the more important role in the formation of my music material is played by human voices, generally the noises and voices of nature, scenes of natural elemental forces and particularly of the universe.

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

V. R.: This question fundamentally relates to my ‘adjustment’ of a musical structure to other people’s sensory perception and feeling (*aisthesis*). I care very deeply if my music affects another human being, but I think I should attempt nothing to make my music (which might, though not necessarily, be recognized as the representative of my compositional-poetical method) accessible from the aspect of aesthesia.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

V. R.: My (tone) music (as well as any music other than *musique concrète*) is incapable of ‘absorbing’ any non-musical meanings, and it is very resilient to the goods of ‘ready-made’ culture. Admittedly, as I have already said, it perhaps can absorb the non-musical scenes of the cosmos, but it cannot transmit them to others. I personally can experience this absorption taking place, but it is quite unlikely that the others too can have the same ‘readout’.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

V. R.: The ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ are artificial sounds whose presence and duration cannot be chosen. The noises of large facilities, the incessant safety signals of automobiles (more boring than repetitive music) and, most of all, torturous pounding – I suppose that kind of subcultural music is called ‘techno’ – coming from a multitude of vehicles. These sounds affect my creation only inasmuch as they prevent me from ‘hearing’ my own music.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

V. R.: The increasing complexity of a musical structure is, most of the time, directly proportional to the increase of structural abundance, and inversely proportional to euphony. However, not everything is so symmetric and straightforward. According to my feeling, the degree of cacophony (as the opposite of euphony) also depends on the timbre of the sound source, on the presence of the overtones with the frequency ratio of 7:1 or 9:1 to the fundamental, and on intensity. Thus, for me, a minor second produced by two trumpets is more cacophonous than eleven minor seconds played by violins.

16. If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?

V. R.: In spite of the suffix ‘-logy’, the futurology of any human activity is not a science, and it is least successful in the domain of art or, more broadly, spiritual creation. Thus, I have never thought about any prospects. After all, for any future – because there is not only one future – the most essential is that it becomes the present some day. And we are already ‘dealing with’ one present. In that present, ‘chasms’ and differences are closer to me than ‘erasing boundaries’. By the way, I do not think that the flow, or parallel flows, of ‘musical his-

tory' go astray in any respect, 'lose their way', sink into crisis. The tendency to see 'ends' and crises everywhere and every so often is probably influenced by Hegel's model of events and values, which already from the first failed to hold true – in the viewpoint of the state system of the Junkerist Prussia as an ideal, or in the aspect of Hegel's absolute idealism being the last 'most developed, richest' philosophy, or that art 'in its highest vocation' remains only 'a thing of the past'. This model failed to hold true later as well, in its applications to the 'end' of opera, to the end of art based on formal features, which is definitely followed by conceptual art, etc. Undoubtedly, everything that came into being will meet its end, but that end will occur when the phenomenon itself becomes exhausted, and not when all the Hegels, Adornos, Olivas and Kosuths say so. Finally, I am not in the least concerned about those changes in spiritual creation and art which are initiated by the authors themselves, whereas I am deeply concerned by the changes that are artificially directed from centres of power based on profit and, even more deeply, on making the culture 'grey' in order to gain control over the human masses in multiple ways. In that respect, as one of the consequences, artistic music, individuality and diversity are in danger of being swallowed by popular subculture.

17. Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the 'survival' of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?

V. R.: Three questions in one. I could answer the first one affirmatively. Probably, by 'contemporary conditions' you imply publicly suggested attributes of constructing an acoustic structure that, with or without a textual manifesto, are offered by a group of creators almost at the same time. But, it seems to me that this is not so much an adjustment of the general compositional system to the said conditions, but rather that a certain larger number of composers adjusts the systems they have been using to the newly-suggested systems of a few distinguished composers. This adjustment occurs in various forms: through discursive statements about the goals and purposes of the proposed changes in sound; by increasing the complexity or simplification of some or all of the properties of an acoustic structure; by introducing new sound sources (if possible); by excluding the most important constituent of music – the sound – while retaining the name of music, etc. As for the third sub-question, I have not quite understood the role of 'ecological adjustment' in comprehending compositional systems.

18. *Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?*

V. R.: My state as a being in its entire range – from cellular to global consciousness, from sensory to mental, to spiritual – is certainly determined by its biological nature. In a certain sense, this biological nature yields limitations, too, but also the desire to overcome those limitations. Of course, I have been thinking that the improved biological foundation – a better musical ear, absolute memory, higher intelligence – would perhaps allow me to create works of music that would satisfy me even more, but this catching up would never end. In another sense, it is certain that, from the aspect of permanence, creative results can be perceived as phenomena that endure beyond a human lifetime.

19. *In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?*

V. R.: If by ‘biology’ you mean inherited abilities and inclinations – I do not have a reliable answer to that. I do not even know if I have a way to establish which influence is predominant: heritage or experience. Maybe neither of these factors predominates absolutely, but instead their influences interchange.

20. *Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?*

V. R.: I might be able to answer this question if I underwent a sex change, so that I could assess what it is like to create as a person of one sex as opposed to the other.

21. *Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences ‘colour’ the content of music you create?*

V. R.: There are several such moments. In 1946, I heard Grieg’s *Piano Concerto* in A minor and definitely decided against being a pianist in favour of becoming a composer. That is to say: composer too, since I also intended to become a painter. In 1951, I saw some of Schönberg’s and Webern’s scores that, for a short while, bewitched me with their graphic appearance, and in 1952, I heard Bartók’s *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* and *Music for Strings* and I realized I was off course. Ever since, I have had no doubts about the mode in which music resides, and so graphic notation, which appeared later, could not sway me. The approach to music which I consider my true path was conceived at that time. Under the influence of Stravinsky, I deviated from that path for

a short period, in 1954–1956, towards Neoclassicism (which in 1955 I called ‘polymusic’), only to start ‘listening for’ ‘my own’ music in 1957–1958 – now without any external influences. This music – if we are talking about ‘musical music’, not metamusic – I compose to this day.

I have no personal experiences that would ‘colour the content of music I create’ – my music is the only experience I have that is related to it. Since music is not – as Jankélévitch put it – ‘ineffable’, but rather – as Jankélévitch did not put it – ‘untellable’, it is also impossible for me to say anything about my ‘musical music’ that would be a sufficient basis for recognizing it. I can only give a few short and approximate structural specifications and describe the effects of my own music on myself. My music is maximalist. It works with all the parameters of sound, equally. The very structure, on average, is complex and based on the principle of the change of the frequency of non-repeating sounds and on hyper-polyphony, whereas I began to nurture hyper-polyphony in 1958, completely irrespective of any organized method of sound mass music, or even micro-polyphony. The effect of my music lies between ‘sacral’ and ‘cosmic’. These determinatives, or sound tribes (stated in my text *Spektar zvuka* [*Spectrum of Sound*] published in 1960 in the *Danas* magazine), transcend style: Bach’s *Three-Part Invention in F Minor* and Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms* also have a sacral effect on me.

Interview with the composer Svetlana Savić

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

Svetlana Savić: It is certainly more a matter of nature, by its origin and structure, but it has become an indispensable matter of culture through ever increasing mass presence.

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

S. S.: Mirrors are powerful tools, especially if they are curved ☺.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

S. S.: This power is the undeniable responsibility of the one who creates the music, and that person is the product of nature and culture. The sense and meaning of music can be the subject of a game, manipulation, experiment, provocation, of the unconscious or superconscious mind of the creator. All the other connotations are another game, manipulation, experiment, provocation...

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

S. S.: Neither the story nor music require a supplement, nor do they have to interpret each other. It is a matter of human nature and free will to join them or put them in a counterpoint.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?*

S. S.: My 'milieu' is the tone, its nature, potential, accords and rhythms. That would be nature. What comes from culture is an incentive for a tone: archetype, association, word...

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

S. S.: No answer.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

S. S.: No answer.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

S. S.: The need for sound and action.

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes, most often?

S. S.: Excitement, delight, joy.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

S. S.: The process is never the same, because each composition is new and has unique challenges, demands and problems. Phases do exist and they vary in duration. Sometimes an abnormally long and 'barren' phase is followed by one that flies by, smoothly and effortlessly. There are no strategies, there is decision-making at important moments, where one decision rules out all the others and leads to a new crossroad, with new decisions...

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

S. S.: Oh, yes, all of the above and more.

12. *What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?*

S. S.: Repeating units or phrases, harmonic-melodic tissue, pulsation.

13. *Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?*

S. S.: No answer.

14. *In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?*

S. S.: Sounds of machines and certain radio and TV stations. I try not to ignore them.

15. *Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?*

S. S.: No answer.

16. *If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

S. S.: No answer.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

S. S.: No answer.

18. *Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?*

S. S.: No, just as a beautiful and exciting ‘private enterprise’. I used to have a more romantic idea about that, especially while absorbing Berdyaev’s *The Meaning of the Creative Act* ☺. Back then, I used composing to fight the fear of death, to call various religions and witchdoctors for help, to meditate, to follow the symbols of nature and man...

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

S. S.: I can watch and think ‘from afar’ and ‘from near by’, in turns; I can feel the worth; I can know when to ‘let go’ or abandon.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

S. S.: No answer.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences ‘colour’ the content of music you create?

S. S.: The experiences of love and nostalgia, death, ‘near death’, fears and exaltation.

Interview with the composer Ivana Stefanović

1. *In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?*

Ivana Stefanović: I feel that music is very close to its primeval source, to its archaic origins established without the human presence. But music itself, it began with humankind/culture. Even when it is highly elaborated, music retains the memory of the nature of impulsiveness, of urges, primordial energies, pressure striving to be released, to cry, to utter. Some more recent theories (Mithen) speak of music as pre-linguistic communication, which would mean that we sang before we spoke.

Music begins by the articulation of voice, breath, breathing in and out, i.e. by life itself. The whistle, string, hammer, or animal skin stretched over a resonator, a membrane, percussion – those are extensions of the hand and the voice. Later, this elementary principle was reinterpreted, transmuted into new stylized, elaborated forms. Knowledge, technique and skill were nurtured, new means were sought, the philosophy of art emerged – and that is what we might call the cultural dimension. The natural-natural turns into the elaborated-natural.

And another thing: music has two more properties. First, it is always *functional*. Since the very beginning, it has served a purpose. Communicational pre-linguistic systems were intended to conquer, seduce, to send a message, to attract or repel, to manipulate.

The other property of music is that it is also a ‘pleasure cake’. One can do without it.

Although nowadays it might seem that music is more a cultural than a natural phenomenon – it never loses its first, initial affiliation.

Nature is a generic name for music.

2. *Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?*

I. S.: I do not know why, but I do not recognize words such as ‘real’ and ‘exact’ in relation with what is *natural* in music. Tone *is* real, frequency and intensity *are* real, even exact, measurable, but I still prefer to connect other terms with the nature of music. For me, the attributes of the natural would be: elusive,

sensitive, fluctuating, instinctive, inevitable... The same goes for the cultural you describe as 'virtual, fictitious'. I almost wish I could replace these terms. But it is certain that the nature of music cannot do without form, technique, comprehending, interpretations... and I ascribe all of those to culture.

3. If a piece of music has power 'in itself' and 'for itself', is nature principally 'responsible' for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other 'agents'?

I. S.: Let us go with other agents.

If I understood the question correctly, then the answer would be as follows: In the periods of music history when technique and knowledge overpowered instinct, the 'cultural layer' was the one which occasionally would take over, absorb, 'eat up' the meaning, and sometimes even successfully conceal and camouflage the lack thereof. But even then the sense is there, inside, in the work, when it radiates what you call 'power in itself', nature is still easy to recognize. Emotionality, mysteriousness, elusiveness... are part of music's natural being.

The individual power of a creator's talent is what generates the power of the work 'in itself'.

4. Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?

I. S.: Now I am much more at home.

Dramaturgy (a story) is immanent to music. What would become of perfect sound structures if they were not bound by a dramatic element? If it is not out of place to present one's own poetic and apply it to the general philosophy of music, then I would say that music has more and more need of a story. Or it is in dire need of it again. Since it is increasingly turning into a derivative of a complex cultural process, music is increasingly attached to a narrative, to a statement, it is (again) approaching other related domains of the mind (literature, the word, the textual, the visual, the pantomimic, the image, the theatrical, the pictorial...) Not because music cannot (could not) survive on its own, but because the code of the times replaces or redirects the complexity of the purely musical to multimedia stratifications and complexity. But something similar also occurred in the 16th, 18th and 20th centuries. Therefore, nothing new, apart from technique and technology.

5. Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound 'reside'? Where would you 'locate' your true acoustic creative 'milieu'?

I. S.: If we speak of my *true* creative milieu, it is better described by the question *what is it*, rather than *where is it*. Thus, wherever it might be, it is completely quiet. Quiet, but not empty. It is something like Democritus's union of *the empty* and *the full*. And 'wherever there is a void, there must also be a space surrounding it', says Leonardo, and I feel that this space must be pretty quiet.

By preserving a quiet milieu, I preserve my basic motive – or possibly even the only motive – for creation.

Now, in which moment does that space/milieu start to fill, and with what...? That is another matter. But that which is filling it – sound – is not in my case too far from its contradiction.

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

I. S.: For me, just as for many other composers, performers are very important, inspirational, stimulating. They assign an occasional task or present a solution, they pull towards something in their characters and artistic features. It is a sort of synergy, in which the performers need not participate willingly, or they even may be unaware of how important they are in the incentive to create. To paraphrase Marina Abramović: the artist is present, the performers are present, with all their singularities and merits. And sometimes this is quite enough for an idea to sparkle.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

I. S.: Composing is often a labour, a task. A commitment with a deadline and various limitations. It means that creation is often a matter of practice, even routine, and certainly of craft, involving external factors which are sometimes even dominant. It is often like this, but that is, however, only a framework. Because once the process begins, completely autonomous processes kick in. And intuition. And the irrational.

Now you ask me about the realm of the unconscious, when nothing of this external practice exists, and I reply as follows: When an Israeli psychologist tried to send Henry Moore a book he wrote on his creativity, Moore did not even read it and had no intention to. He claimed that any such clarification of what goes on in an artist's realm of the unconscious and the rational disclosure of these events could hinder subsequent creativity.

Self-perception is one thing, but to attempt disclosure of the unconscious is quite another. We already know too much (even about ourselves), and feel too little.

The things we could find in our unconscious!

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

I. S.: To create. To give birth. To build. To invent something that does not exist and has not existed. The motivating phenomenon of the ‘blank page’ and the process of filling that page. In the end, the page filled by the idea gains a form, an identity (title, opus, number... whatever) and, most importantly, the possibility to communicate and ‘live’ its own life.

It seems so simple, but it is not.

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes, most often?

I. S.: Self-sensation. I feel like conscious drop of water in an ocean. Or as a ‘smart’ grain of sand in a boundless desert.

This feeling involves something slightly mystical, though it later does not get imprinted onto the work, it cannot be heard in the music – or so I think.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

I. S.: I fantasize about something; it is a state on the brink of a dream or something similar. I let it overwhelm me. Is it an idea? It often is, but not always. Sometimes it is just a state: an intellectual-emotional uterus, tepid water, mental levitation, shutting off... I have mastered this technique well.

Only later I wonder: And what is it that I have to say? And how shall I say it? This happens at the beginning. When the idea appears and conquers, then I can ‘wake up’ and assume the position of the Egyptian scribe.

The idea compels one to create form and lasts for as long the process continues. And it is never the same – not only the idea, but the process too. But what almost always *is* the same is the need to travel the path from the vague state of an idea to the end in the shortest possible time, and then to go back to elaborate the details. Most often it happens so. And sometimes it is completely different. At the end, after this process of ‘work in progress’ is completed, not much is left of what I have planned, or something entirely different emerges. Like Picasso: while I am drawing a head, a horse appears.

11. *Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?*

I. S.: Although I admire that procedure, I have never tried to follow Messiaen and transpose natural sounds (birds chirruping) to musical instruments. After all, he is still unsurpassed at it. And I would not repeat that. I am interested in the acoustic document, the sound archive.

Therefore, even without Messiaen's or anyone else's compositional experience, I help myself with the sounds of wind, waves, appliances, as well as all kinds of other quotations as if they were served on a tray. I reach out, pick out a few, and take them. Real sounds are, on the one hand, musical materials which, in a context with all the other elements or all by themselves, create various semantic formulas, symbols which are easy or hard to decode.

But this other thing, the sounds being *documents*, that is what really interests me, this fact really attracts me to them. And only sometimes, rarely, I reach out and intervene in a documentary sound.

12. *What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?*

I. S.: Is it accessible from the aspect of aesthesia at all? I am not quite sure about it, although I wish it was.

If we assume it is, communication is the goal of what is unconscious in us. It wants to talk without making a confession, to uncover itself without getting trite. Then it chooses a form – it uses the secret language of art.

If there is something accessible in a certain work of mine (the method is not in the offer), then it happens because I do not hesitate to use commonplace solutions from the emotional range. Nor do I avoid using what has already been seen, 'the known'.

By a combination of unfortunate circumstances, today we have found ourselves in an age which is bad for the arts. I am referring to the absolute victory of the music industry which contains a lot of rejects, too much junk, and whose elements are all 'known' and repeated many times in a banal way.

But I write music in the face of all that. Therefore I prescribed to myself 'a small measure of things': small forms, a bit of the already-seen, all that accompanied by small ambitions... I write only for 'the little party in the corner' – provided they have not left already – and I do not know to whom I am dis-

patching my bottle with the message. It is enough to approach a single human being and win their understanding. Nothing more than that. Nor less.

13. Provided your music 'absorbs' them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical 'ready-made' cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

I. S.: Do you think that anyone recently has managed to contrive anything new? I do not. If we take things with a grain of humour and irony, then the second-hander¹ nature of music, even mine, is a quite widespread phenomenon. Some use patterns of 'haute couture', others of 'Chinese make'. Some crib from others, others crib from themselves. A good forensic musicologist would easily find various 'ready-made' residues. The only question is whether they are well and successfully hidden.

Maybe everything has been said in music, and so nowadays there is nothing left but 'fashion' patterns (...Bach, Mahler, Debussy, Xenakis, Göbbels... just a short selection of the influential ones, but it could be much longer), which have been deposited over the centuries of the 'cultured' history of music. And one question always crops up: Who influenced you the most?

But it surely does not mean that I dispute this old/new thing. Not at all. It means that a few successful combinations of 'the old' already result in 'the new'.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic 'polluters' of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

I. S.: I have already said that my creation is not purist and that, as an author, I quite consciously live in my failing world. Garbage is all around us, we live in visible and invisible dumps, but we have grown used to it, to a scandalous extent. I could not say what the ultimate is: insoluble radioactive waste, inexplicable quantities of plastic bags, or acoustic pollution. Which one of them will degrade first?

In spite of everything, I believe in the subversive resilience of art. Because of its connection with the unconscious, not the other way round. And it does not seem to me that the world began with us. Still less, that it will end with us. It will not. Some kind of cleanup will eventually happen.

¹ The composer is alluding to the ensemble *Secondhanders*, who in 2011 performed her work *Duboki do*. For more on the ensemble cf. the website <http://www.secondhanders.net> (Translator's note.)

15. *Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?*

I. S.: Beyond any doubt. And what you call ‘complicatedness’ proved to be, in many a form and many a case, quite a miserable simplicity.

Now we are witnessing the come back of consonance. Euphony is back. (Do we all remember how we laughed in the late 1980s when it peeped from the works of some composers? And how we laughed even more at those who never gave up on it!)

The philosophical issue of euphonic consonance has now been actualized. It must be read in a new code. The modern age is an age of many currents and phenomena. And there are more and more of them. They are ever more diverse and ever more simultaneous. Neither the music nor the audience who follow these ‘streams’ have any common ground.

Yet, in no way does this put back the aesthetic function of music.

16. *If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

I. S.: To lose one’s way is an event, not a tragedy. As I have said, music today should be named ‘musics’, plural. There are so many indescribably dissimilar things that are labelled with this term. And yes, technology has gotten involved to top it all, but it is just one part of this stratified, multi-headed monster. In the near future, I think only fusions have prospects. Blends.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

I. S.: The key word is adaptation. Contemporary conditions must not frighten us. Technology must not frighten us. It is here, it is good that it is here, it is not a poetic value, it is a fact. Technology should be a tool. But not one that enslaves you – it should only be used. One should master it.

Otherwise, the survival of music is not even in question. Musics and music will exist even after we vanish. Let us look around for a moment. What do we

see? From the remains of excessive, self-sufficient academicism, new simplicity emerges relieved of excessive academicism. Therefore, I do not say that some young people will not witness some great *resurrection* of music. But of which one/ones?

Everything is changing so rapidly right now, and we take ourselves too seriously.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

I. S.: You mean death? No, I am not interested at all in anything after. I am interested in right now. Right now and right here. For me, even ‘later’ has been ‘now’ for a long time. I want to hear the angels from above right now.

If you mean whether I expect my music to outlive me – the answer is the same.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

I. S.: The creative process is *ludus*. If I were not playing, I would not create. Experience is built into that process. But, you surely understand that playing, although not a form of behaviour common in maturity, i.e. old age, is nevertheless allowed. I will not say that, in time, the creative process becomes easier, because that would not be entirely true, but with experience, *ludus* gets different. Acquiring experience is difficult, but carrying the acquired experience is pleasant. Though... I do not rely on experience much. Curiosity and looking for something different usually win.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

I. S.: I think that, in most cases, without the information on the first page of the score and the name written on the front cover, one could hardly recognize the author’s sex and the gender of the musical work. I shall not even think about the gender values of a work. That is a matter for analysis. Whether the gender is ‘heard’ or not – I do not know and I am waiting to be told by those who observe the works, listen to them, analyze and write. And whether I will be listening when they tell me that – who knows?

I sometimes deal with a female subject or subjects (*Tumačenje sna* [*Interpretation of the Dream*], *Ona* [*She*]) because these are my subjects, and hence they become the subject of the work, its content. In these cases, my gender position openly influences itself, engages in introspection, reassesses itself. But

the issue of female sensibility, difference, gender particulars need not coincide with the author's gender. *Tumačenje sna*, I believe, could have been written by a man.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

I. S.: I am very sensitive to social situations and circumstances.

Personal life has never entered my music, in any way, but the changes in the social environment have, very much so. At one moment, I was simply bursting with the need to communicate, to 'converse' directly with whoever was listening, the need to associate through all the walls which were being raised and built around us, and that feeling is still in effect, or even growing stronger. Although I do not need great personal communication, as a social being, and even artistic one, I cannot stand to be denied the right to culturological and artistic communication.

Interview with the composer Vladimir Tošić

1. In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?

Vladimir Tošić: No matter what, music is primarily a matter of culture. In nature, there is no music in the strict sense. Only human beings, with their general and musical education, are capable of creating music. Music is the very refined combination and organization of an acoustic material, even when it is taken directly from nature as a concrete sound. We can very clearly see that music is definitely a matter of culture if we look at what kind of music is listened to by particular social groups and members of various nations in different parts of the world. The higher the educational level, the more refined the music selected for listening. The idea that anyone can listen to artistic music and that it can affect them in its own right, is utterly utopian. A certain education is necessary to reach the level of listening to artistic music.

2. Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?

V. T.: The nature of music is very exact and based on clear physical and mathematical laws which are relatively easy to define. However, the roots of music are extremely irrational and immeasurable, so they cannot and never will be explained. The very core of the creation of a musical work is utterly inexplicable. No one will ever be able to clarify how the initial idea for composing a particular work of music comes into being. Even when some composers think they know why they have written particular compositions, those explanations are highly subjective and usually not true. The inception of an idea is a miracle of birth as such. However, everything else in the compositional process *must* be rational. The organization of the materials, choice of instruments, application of certain techniques, etc., *must not* be irrational. This part of creation requires knowledge, and a lot of it, and knowledge is the consequence of a certain culture and upbringing in a broader sense.

3. *If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?*

V. T.: If music has power – and unfortunately, this is statistically still very rare – it stems from nature which is tremendously finely filtered through the medium of the composer, who is, in turn, inevitably a part of some culture. Various cultures produce various kinds of music, without a doubt. Furthermore, culture is necessary for recognizing a musical work, whereas different cultures are needed for understanding and experiencing different kinds of music. For example, European and Eastern music necessitate, or rather require, the appropriate cultural preparation without which one cannot fully comprehend the ‘language’ of particular music.

4. *Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?*

V. T.: Music *must not* tell any kind of story. This has been attempted countless times in the course of history, and naturally, it is still attempted today, but all of these attempts ended badly. Music is the *only* art that is abstract by nature and acts in its own right; hence it does *not* need any verbal supplement to establish communication. All the other arts originated from concrete premises and evolved to abstraction over time. By including storytelling, music is degraded. I feel very sorry for schoolchildren who are urged to *recognize* in a certain work *what* the composer described! This is the most fallacious approach to introducing children to artistic music and it should be abandoned (even forbidden) *right away*.

On the other hand, a story cannot do without music. Film, drama, commercials, etc. can no longer function without music, at all. However, this often reduces music to the level of cultivated noise which has no aesthetic value whatsoever and represents a mere acoustic background or a useless decoration. Nine times out of ten, such applied music can be composed by almost anybody who has a computer, as well as a modicum of talent and musical education. It is exactly what has been happening, because nowadays the majority of directors do not care about the quality of music at all, but only for the production rate and price of such an acoustic backdrop. Therefore, today such music is written almost exclusively by semi-skilled amateurs instead of educated composers. Some thirty years ago, the situation in this domain was completely different: film music was written by educated composers and performed by professional orchestras, which lent a completely different quality, weight and significance to this music.

5. *Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound 'reside'? Where would you 'locate' your true acoustic creative 'milieu'?*

V. T.: In the cultural sense, my music originated from the European tradition and there is no doubt about it. However, it shares a sizable common ground with the music of the East, primarily in the treatment of time. Time in my music is much closer to the Indian notion of that parameter instead of the European. The number of music events per unit of time is far smaller than in the European music. This is music of longer durations, compared to the material it deals with. Hence, absolute durations are not enormous (although it happened in my early works), but the time is less packed.

Between the two opposite treatments of musical time – eternity compressed into an instant (e.g. Webern) and an instant extended to eternity (e.g. Indian ragas) – I committed to the latter, by my nature and not by choice.

6. *To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?*

V. T.: Above all, I create for live performers and a live audience – which is to say, a concert audience. I believe that a concert is one of the most delicate spiritual experiences possible for a human being. The transfer of emotions from the composer by means of the performers to the audience is a divine process which cannot be compared or replaced by anything. This interchange and induction of spiritual energy is one the most beautiful moments in the musical profession. Listening to music using various reproduction devices is nowadays inevitable, naturally, but in no way and to no extent can it substitute the experience of a successful concert. Physical sound carriers (as the ugly expression goes) are fantastically useful, but they give a petrified, unvarying sound of a composition, which is contrary to the nature of music. A musical work is a living thing which, as a phoenix, comes to life and dies with every new performance, while at a concert, before us, an entire short life unfolds with its vagaries, and that is the main source of its vitality and uniqueness.

Regarding instruments, I just love to colour one and the same composition in different hues. There is an established tradition in my creation to adapt almost every work for different instruments and ensembles. I mostly write for piano, flute, strings and orchestra, but I have also made dozens of arrangements for other instruments and atypical combinations.

I devoted some time to electronics 25 years ago, when it was a novelty and when expectations were running high, but not today. Electronics, in essence,

did not bring any particularly new qualities in general, or even excessively different sounds. A skilful orchestrator can produce more or less everything that electronic instruments are capable of, in the sense of timbre, if anyone at all sets out to do that. A different timbre by itself cannot elevate a musical work to some higher level. Bach's music sounds equally good on various instruments, even electronic ones. On the other hand, a heap of electronic devices on stage often does not produce any kind of spiritual experience. As usual, it is necessary to keep everything in perspective, even the use of electronic instruments.

Besides, a recorded electronic work is always precisely the same, and there is no charm of a live performance. This is boring and lifeless to me and so I no longer deal with it.

Using live electronics makes slightly more sense, because the charm of live performance is somewhat preserved, if one does not overdo it. However, we are often witnesses of acoustic pollution by computers and electronics, which, unfortunately, do not produce the appropriate creative acoustic result.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

V. T.: I am highly influenced by slow natural processes: the change of seasons, the change of day and night, the change of cyclones and anticyclones, etc. Continuous evolutionary processes are something that is deeply imbedded in my music, and without them it would not be recognizable.

In a way, culture is the ability to start one's personal work from the highest level reached by a certain profession at the time. It takes a lot of knowledge and effort to determine that level, because it is not exactly as obvious, defined and profiled as one might think. If you start from the next-to-highest level, you will usually not get far because you will keep discovering things that are already known. Most creators do not succeed in solving this problem and they follow the beaten paths of the past, because it is so much easier, more comfortable, and it yields faster results in a society which is generally always a little late. It is always easier to embrace something that resembles what we already know than to make an effort, i.e. acquire some new knowledge, and to set sail for new acoustic realms. In that respect, avant-garde is a completely wrong term, although naturally quite inevitable today. Because one cannot go ahead of one's own time: that is impossible. All imagination is based precisely on the current moment. Therefore, what we call avant-garde, and what certainly does always exist, are just *rare* human beings who are *synchronous* with their own time! All

the rest are lagging behind the time they live in, more or less, depending on the level of education. Only the most educated and the most talented live in the current moment, and the others are behind them in varying degrees, like cars behind a locomotive. Unfortunately, small countries are always very late behind the large centres, so they in fact live in the past (just see how much time it takes for everyday fashion in a large centre to reach the periphery!). Then what can one say about cultural processes, which are far slower and much more complex? Before the concentric circles of culture reach smaller communities, they become quite changed, or even deformed – as in the game of Chinese whispers. We are witnesses to the Bologna Process which has undergone fundamental alterations since the time it came in touch with our environment. To live in a small country yet to be synchronous with the time is an extremely difficult task which can only be solved by the strongest and the most talented, but at any rate the most educated people.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

V. T.: I cannot describe it because it has been simply given to me in a certain way. As the writer Pavle Ugrinov put it, ‘zadat život’ [‘given life’]. We are all born with a sum of particular characteristics that are the result of a complex genetic interplay. The unsolvable mystery of creation is located precisely in that sharing of genes, which determine our main characteristics. Therefore, a creative engine is obtained by the very act of being born. You either have it or you do not, and it cannot be learned or acquired. The creative engine is like an earthquake – it lurks in your gut, waiting. It appears, completely uninvited and without announcement, when it is least expected. It can be dormant for days, months, even years, but if we have it, the earthquake will inevitably happen, at some point. Nothing is sadder than someone who *wants* to be creative. There are many things that one can learn, practice, compensate by hard work, but if the fundamental creative impulse which shakes us at some moment is absent, the whole thing is hopeless and it always yields miserable results.

Therefore, I do not know when and why, but occasionally I get shaken by that earthquake and I *have* to work, even if I am not at all in the mood to, and would rather be resting or having fun.

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?

V. T.: I cannot say that there is a particular emotion or situation which prompts me to work. I do not think that one must write merry music when one is content and sad music when one is cheerless. That interrelation is far more complex. Just as we carry various germs that never make us ill in our whole

life, we also carry a lot of creative charge which, by virtue of some trigger, is released at some moment and comes to light, seemingly without any cause or reason that would be clear to us. In my case, the only kind of regularity is that, in one way or another, I accumulate creative energy during the summer, and it is spontaneously released in the winter. In that respect, my personal creative sine wave is very readily noticeable.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

V. T.: The beginning of creation is a mystery and it will forever be. Let me be clear: I do not see any divine hand in that, just a combination of attributes we inherit in some ways which are (maybe fortunately) still unknown to us. If this process could be explained, it would be easy to write some kind of handbook, or a ‘cookbook’, for composing, and anyone could do it. However, luckily, it is impossible, and creativity will always be the privilege – or fate, depending on one’s viewpoint – of talented individuals.

The specific quality of my compositional process is perhaps the fact that, from the very beginning, I already have an idea about the *entire* composition. Therefore, instead of moving from note to note, I have a vision of the whole piece. In that respect, I often compose sections at random, knowing already what will happen in between. Of course, this idea is only global, at first without the fine points, and during composing it undergoes changes in the details, the duration proportions, instrumentation, etc., but it retains the initial vision to the end.

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

V. T.: Nature has a great influence on my life. Thus, natural movements in general – most of all wind and waves – most certainly define the tissue of my music. Naturally, not directly – I do not imitate these sounds nor I am interested in doing so – but in some derived, figurative layer. The processes in my compositions are musical analogues of the processes in nature, but they are definitely not their musical simulation. The gradual change of day and night, the gradual rise of waves at sea and their disappearance, the gradual strengthening of the wind and its dying away, etc. are kinds of processes which I use in my com-

positions, too. Thus, they mostly have a global arch-shaped symmetry with the gentle, continuous increase and decrease of all the musical parameters – similar to a natural event.

The influence of popular music, in some of my compositions, is manifested by the prominence of rhythm and the use of percussion. Primordial music probably originated from rhythm and, for a long time, it was the main vehicle of a musical work. However, artistic music at some point renounced this important element, almost completely. In most of the traditional ensembles, percussion is completely absent or is used quite sporadically. In my opinion, it is a serious mistake because rhythm is one of the basic driving forces in music. In that respect, I sometimes quite consciously use very pronounced rhythmic patterns with prominent percussion.

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

V. T.: In my case, there is no dilemma whatsoever. The main defining factor of my art is the *reduction* of musical materials and procedures. It is, therefore, a conscious holding back from the abundance of possibilities and focusing on a small number of chosen developmental forces of a musical work. The main characteristics of my creation are the *musical process* stemming from *repetitiveness*, and these principles make it possible and easier for the listener to fathom my music. They are the *conditio sine qua non* of my work. Without processes and repetitiveness, my music would not be what it is. Of course, the selection of acoustic material, keys and modes, etc. is also important, but without the evolutionary tissue, typical of all my composition, the results would be completely different. By ‘process’ I mean an artistic algorithm which, once set at the beginning of the composition, determines its global course from which it can no longer deviate. This continuous, evolutionary development of all the musical parameters is the most distinctive feature of my works.

13. Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?

V. T.: We are all part of the time we live in and we cannot escape all kinds of influences. But at this point, I really cannot determine what these influences would be in my creation. Nevertheless, if they do exist, I believe that they are very small.

14. In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?

V. T.: Without any hesitation, the ultimate polluter for me is the television. The aggression of the image in every possible shape and at every possible moment most definitely destroys imagination. And without imagination, neither the individual nor humankind has prospects. Imagination is humanity’s most powerful tool, or even weapon, in fighting against natural forces. An imaginative person leads the world forward. However, music accompanied by an image, a film, a commercial, a drama, in an elevator or a store, etc., increases entropy, and music is no longer effective. And television leads on in this negative effect and has the most ominous share. Radio and books develop one’s imagination, whereas the television image makes it uniform and obliterates it. Of course, the image is and can be creative, there is no question about that, but the problem is in the manner and quantity of images needlessly used always and everywhere. This kind of image leads to Pavlovian conditioning. When you hear certain music, you immediately see the accompanying image, too. Children nowadays recognize a particular music by the film or the video in which they have heard it, and they can no longer detach themselves from that image. It is a kind of synaesthetic rape: you hear the music involuntarily, whether you want to or not, and you see what someone forces you to see. And this is usually catastrophic and has nothing to do with a particular kind of music. It is just pasted to an image so as to distinguish this music, usually bad, by means of a possible visual shock, from some other music, usually also bad, with just one and completely non-artistic goal – to sell it better. Music has become goods, in the worst possible sense, and the most atrocious kind of enticing packaging is employed to single out this music from the competition and to impose it on the potential buyer. Since (bad) music is no longer effective on its own, it is necessary to supplement it visually with a lot of absurdly chosen, diversified action and pornography, which altogether indeed pollutes our cultural space to the utmost.

15. Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?

V. T.: If ‘euphony’ means ‘a pleasing sound’, in the broadest sense, I believe that the avant-garde around the 1950s caused the comeback of the pleasing sound, however strange that might appear. This avant-garde was an immensely important and inevitable period in the development of contemporary music, but it was also a period which led to the final break-up between the audience and the composers. Simply, that type of music, for the most part, could not be appreciated by the listener. In response to that, another kind of avant-garde emerged,

trying to create yet another new music after who knows how many attempts, but one which the audience would listen to – and strangely enough, they succeeded. This was the inception of *musical minimalism* which, beyond any doubt, led to the emergence of *new, different*, but at the same time, agreeable music. The audience embraced this style without any reservations, but curiously enough, or perhaps quite expectedly, the musical establishment put up fierce resistance. It is easier to hide the lack of talent in something that is repelling and incomprehensible than in a sound which is transparent and acoustically acceptable. Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Michael Nyman and other minimalist authors restored music to the audience, who gladly accepted their work after the period of ‘grey’ and lifeless sound. Venues are full when they perform with their ensembles, and the sales of their CDs are sometimes comparable to those of popular music.

16. If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?

V. T.: Only what returns to the origins of music has prospects, and that is primarily agreeability. Writing something that no one will ever want to hear has no longer any sense, at all. However, this new path must not lead to banalization. It is necessary to build a new sound and a new acoustic organization, but so that music remains agreeable. Everything else is doomed, especially in the age of aggressive popular music which lures young people already from the infant nursery and follows their every step until they die, so aggressively that most people do not have any kind of choice.

Since my earliest days as a composer, I have advocated this view and tried to apply it in practice. Even when my opus was utterly avant-garde for this environment, my goal was unflinchingly to create *new, different* music, but which had to be *agreeable*. This was no easy path, but in time it brought some results. After the first phase of my avant-garde works, which were very strictly minimalist, I achieved a certain synthesis of avant-garde procedures and acceptable sound, that in the 1990s led to the second phase in my creation and the works such as *Varial, Dual, Fisija [Fission], Trial* etc., which have been intensively performed around the world. Retaining all the postulates from my previous work, I added to my music a necessary dose of agreeability, which was extremely important for further progress.

17. Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they

implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?

V. T.: The way of life is certainly changing. Whether for the better or for the worse, that is a big question, but it is most certainly changing. Hence, artistic music and its techniques and manifestations must inevitably change. It is hard to say how exactly, but if composers live synchronously with their time – that is to say, if they are avant-garde, as I have said earlier – they quite unconsciously find ways of adapting their music and their techniques to the new times. If they do not spend their lives ‘sklopljenih očiju i skrštenih ruku’ [‘with eyes closed and sitting idly by’], as Milan Rakić said, if their eyes are open, if they embrace life in all of its aspects, openly and without prejudice – there is no doubt that they will find the right path.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

V. T.: I really do not. Of course, works – but only the good ones – outlive their authors and provide them with some existence after the biological end. However, to create on this impulse is utterly absurd. I believe that true creative minds never choose their occupation, but that the occupation chooses them. Therefore, they did not *decide* to do it: they *have* to do it – to write, compose, paint etc., whether they want to or not. I do not compose because I planned it (in fact, I never even planned it – my first major was civil engineering), but because music is simply present in my being during the day, and it wakes me up sometimes at night too, even when I am not in a particular mood for work. If this need is genuine, one cannot escape it. If something is left behind a creator, that is great, but even if it is not, the true artist had a fulfilling and good life, which is more than enough in its own right, even when it entails many everyday difficulties and troubles. The need to create is simply incorporated in some people and they produce works quite naturally, just like they breathe or walk, without thinking about whether anyone needs their works or not, whether they will outlive them or not. This need is the *spiritus movens* which cannot be escaped and which brings fulfilment and happiness to the individual even when the work causes a lot of trouble in everyday life.

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

V. T.: It seems to me that the passing of the years, i.e. this aspect of biology, in my case did not lead to a decline in creativity, or the need and desire to

work. My work rate is precisely the same as it has always been, and new ideas and projects keep emerging in my head. The chronic lack of the necessary time and conditions to carry it all out poses more of a problem.

Biology has led to a natural decline regarding the need to reach the public. After a certain number of years of public activity, the pronounced need to present one's work to the public 'right this instant' is replaced by a greater and more relaxed enjoyment in the act of creation itself, and the response of the public gradually loses its significance.

Experience, i.e. a specific knowledge, facilitates the technical aspect of working because there are fewer unknown elements, and new situations are easier to handle. But of course, there is also the danger of repeating oneself, which must be avoided at all costs.

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

V. T.: In a very individual way, my biological properties have definitely influenced my work. The orientation towards nature and natural laws is certainly reflected indirectly in my compositions. The number of events per unit of time, development, the absence of sudden contrasts, slow evolutionary processes, etc. – this is all the result of my inner biological rhythm, which is, in turn, subject to natural laws that greatly influence my life.

However, I do not believe that the cultural particulars of the environment I come from have significantly influenced my work. What I do and how I do it has not emanated at all from the tradition of this environment. On the contrary, what I do has been mostly foreign to this community, because it belongs to a more open and more liberal approach to music which strongly jarred with the dominant developments in Serbian music during the 1970s, when I was forming my style.

Regarding sex, the situation in music so far has been pretty much unidirectional. The vast majority of composers have been men, and so it was simply impossible to ascertain any conceivable differences in the compositional approach – so-called 'men's writing' and 'women's writing'. There have been more and more women composers in the last few decades, but I think the number, for the time being, is still too small to draw the relevant conclusions about the influence of sex on the compositional approach. However, it is quite obvious that the number of women in the musical profession is increasing by the day, so in some foreseeable future such conclusions will be drawn.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences 'colour' the content of music you create?

V. T.: I do not believe that what one would call the ‘crucial moments in life’ have existed in and steered my creation, in the concrete sense. I believe that every creation is, first and foremost, a question of a deep and very gradual evolution which results in overall changes of the creative framework and guidelines. Hence, my creation also displays a very clear development based on principles that have been prominent ever since my very first works.

To be honest, it is possible, even relatively easy, to perceive a transition into a new phase of my creation, around 1990. This, of course, coincided with everything that happened in our country at that time. However, I do not believe that this is in any direct way related to these events, or that these events influenced my work. I think that something simply ripened at the time, as a consequence of continuous evolution, something that was not immediately connected with the events that took place back then, but it obviously coincided with them.

What could perhaps be mentioned as an important steering element in my work is related to the moment when I started creating and to the environment at the time. The middle of the 1970s was a very creative time in Belgrade, where a group of very active people were gathered at the same time in the same place. That certainly must have influenced me, to some extent. However, I do not think that this interaction influenced the main guidelines of my work, which would, I believe, be fundamentally the same in New York or London, but it did lead to certain compositions and projects, which most certainly could not have come about in another place, or in the company of some other people.

Interview with the composer Miloš Zatkalik

1. In your opinion and in the broadest sense, what in music is a matter of nature, and what of culture? In that respect, is music more a matter of nature or of culture?

Miloš Zatkalik: Creators must hold on to their right to experiment with various attitudes towards the relationship between nature and culture, in an abstract or speculative sense, as well as in their own creative practice. The only sensible answer would nevertheless suggest some kind of balance.

2. Is the nature of music that which is real and exact, and the culture of music – what is virtual and fictitious? Or are they two mirrors that reflect each other?

M. Z.: I am not sure what is real or exact in music, and what is fictitious or virtual.

3. If a piece of music has power ‘in itself’ and ‘for itself’, is nature principally ‘responsible’ for its sense, and culture for its meaning, or vice versa? Or does it involve some other ‘agents’?

M. Z.: No answer.

4. Does music have greater need of a story, or the other way round?

M. Z.: Far from it that I deny the possibility of music having a story and a story having music, but I do not see that they *need* each other.

5. Metaphorically speaking, in what realm of nature and/or culture does your work with sound ‘reside’? Where would you ‘locate’ your true acoustic creative ‘milieu’?

M. Z.: I do not understand the question.

6. To what extent and in which ways are certain instruments/voices (so-called classical/acoustical, electronic devices, live electronics etc.) or performers stimulating for your creativity?

M. Z.: I could claim more confidently that there are certain instruments which are not stimulating to me, at all, and for which I have never had a desire to write. Apart from that, as a person inclined to hedonistically relishing a sound as such, I certainly find some instruments more inspirational than others, though it need not necessarily be an issue of an individual instrument; it can be broader, involving certain combinations, or on the contrary, narrower, where certain registers, playing techniques, ways of producing sound may have a stimulating effect.

7. In which dimensions of nature and/or culture do you 'read' the intensity of your own compositional intuition and/or irrational creative actions? Namely, which determinants of nature and of culture, respectively, are crucial for you in the process of musical imagination and creation?

M. Z.: No answer.

8. How would you define your primary creative engine?

M. Z.: Different engines in different situations. If I receive a commission which someone is prepared to pay for, more sublime illusions about a creative engine are not exactly necessary.

9. Which kind of emotional drive steers your creative processes most often?

M. Z.: The answer to this would be similar to the previous one, with the following addition: if I happened to be experiencing strong emotions, I would hardly feel the need to set about composing at those precise moments.

10. How would you describe/present/analyze your compositional process (the relationship between the musical idea and structure; the most common compositional strategies...)?

M. Z.: It is impossible to give a unique answer to this question. During my career as a composer, I naturally experienced changes in my compositional process. There is also a need – I assume it is quite expected for a composer – to experiment with the very process of composing: e.g. to write a work where everything will be 'without putting too fine a point on it', or to write something relying solely on one's inner hearing, etc. etc. To the extent of my capability to describe the process of working on a particular and current composition, it might look like this: two starting points from different domains, but acting simultaneously from the very beginning – one is the sound of the violoncello, the piano and some 'jingling' instruments (bells, celesta?), and the other is the idea

that the composition will certainly have several movements, but not exceeding six or seven minutes in total duration (though I really cannot be sure about where this idea has come from). In the next moment, I clearly see the particular character of the beginning, the way the first minute of music ‘should’ sound like (again, with no explanation why in this exact way). This results in an awareness of what timbres I need, and thus I come up with the final instrumental ensemble. The first movement is written almost ‘by itself’, and so is the beginning of the second one. At this moment, I feel a certain hesitation, a reluctance to sit down and produce a rough version of the ideas that have begun to shape up; therefore I start turning them over in my mind continually for days, delaying the moment when I will actually begin to write them down. This moment nominally depends on some other pressing duties, although I cannot guarantee that the lack of time is the only reason.

Note: This composition was performed almost a year ago. I do not know if this is important, but nevertheless the compositional process was and is just like I sketched it, including the procrastination in putting the ideas down on paper.

11. Do frequency range and the rhythm of the sounds of nature (e.g. wind, waves, animal calls, the universe...) and culture (voices and sounds from the [urban] environment, appliances, popular music...) play any role (and if they do, what are they) in forming the musical material in your compositions?

M. Z.: One could hardly imagine that the abundance of sounds surrounding us would not influence the formation of musical material, or even broader, the attitude towards music. The use, however, of such sounds in my case is never conscious, intentional, nor does it call forth such associations in the majority of the audience from whom I have received feedback. In retrospect, even if I would be willing to recognize such influences, it seems that they could rather be qualified as influences ‘at second hand’, influences of other composers who based their materials on such a content – e.g. Varèse in the domain of sounds of an urban environment (and with the additional reservation that a composer is usually not the best person to be interviewed on the subject ‘Whose/what influences can be recognized in your work?’).

12. What are the primary ways of shaping the musical material that, in your opinion, contribute to your compositional-poetic method being accessible from the aspect of aesthesia?

M. Z.: Assuming it is really accessible? Accessible to whom? Does that accessibility depend primarily on the manner of shaping? I am not sure that I could define any sort of compositional-poetical method of my own.

13. *Provided your music ‘absorbs’ them at all, in what ways and with what goal do conceivable various (non-)musical ‘ready-made’ cultural goods and meanings function in your music?*

M. Z.: Maybe someone from aside could point to the ways. Goal certainly does not exist.

14. *In your opinion, what are the ultimate acoustic ‘polluters’ of culture or nature? Does that influence your creation and how?*

M. Z.: Those who really want to understand my answer should travel by bus from Belgrade to Banja Luka twice a month.

15. *Did the complexity/complicatedness of music around the 1950s pave the way for euphony and structural richness? If it did, to what extent?*

M. Z.: I think that complexity, almost by definition, had to lead to some structural richness (which I assume is not considered a synonym for worth). I would less readily agree that this is related to euphony.

16. *If the ‘arrow of music history’ has lost its way, will the technology (of a musical material, among other things), and which one, be the force to initiate the future of music and close the gap between poetics and aesthesia (or perhaps it is happening already)? Actually, which compositional grammars, techniques and strategies today have prospects, in your opinion?*

M. Z.: As much as I salute the involvement of technology in music, I do not see that it really closes that gap. Just as it cannot be closed by any technique or compositional strategy in its own right (unless we vulgarize bridging the gap as pandering to the taste of the general population). I do not see that the current state of affairs significantly limits any technique or strategy, nor do I see that it favours any one of them in particular.

17. *Are adaptations of the compositional system, techniques and materials to contemporary conditions indispensable for the ‘survival’ of music, and how are they implemented? In that respect, to what extent is ecological adjustment between a stimulus and the mental ability of perception necessary for a compositional system and stylistic traits to be perceived as comprehensible and effective?*

M. Z.: First, it is trivial to state that in some general sense – which is probably somewhat vague, as well – compositional techniques, materials, etc. are always interrelated with broader social, cultural, etc. circumstances. In that

respect, I do not see it as an issue of the survival of music: these processes are regular. Only the survival of individual works or composers can be in question.

Adaptations in what way? The composer must inevitably create in a state of a peculiar tension between the need to be different, unique, to do something that nobody has done, and the realization (or feeling) that, if one is out of tune with the times or stands aloof from relevant developments, then one is in danger not only of being rejected, but also of creating products that are unauthentic, fake – a sort of forgery, one might say.

18. Do you see musical creation as a way of transcending the biological limits of a human life?

M. Z.: Biological? Hm...

19. In what ways and to what extent do biology and experience direct your creative processes?

M. Z.: ‘Biology’ here means: the biological properties of the human species, my individual biological properties, the natural world, biology as a science? The syntagm ‘biology and experience’ means: biology is equal to experience; biology is on one side and experience on the other; experience in biological phenomena?

20. Do the biological and cultural determinants of your sex/gender influence your creation and how?

M. Z.: If someone compellingly demonstrates that to me, I might even believe that they do.

21. Are there any key moments in your life, or periods that steered your musical creation? What kinds of personal experiences ‘colour’ the content of music you create?

M. Z.: There have been such moments – some of them I may not even be aware of – but I do not see any correlation between types of experiences and my creation.